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Review on the Clash of Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism

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Abstract

Both Palestinian patriotism and Zionism, as ideas, epitomize the same standard; to be specific both are patriot developments taking into account the prerequisite of a country for their own particular individuals. The basic issue, nonetheless, is by all accounts that both have been guaranteeing the same real estate parcel for their countries, and consequently the wellspring of inconvenience is more down to earth than ideological. As opposed to the suspicion covered up in this current article's given title, political belief systems don't perceive nor accommodate with each other, nor do they figure out who perceives whom and who accommodate with whom. It is just people, and once in a while likewise assemblages, who—figuratively—start or experience such adjustments of relationship.

KeyWords: Palestinian; Zionism; Patriotism

The Role of Nationalism

Kelman (1999) describes the clashing Arab and Israeli nationalisms as conflicting identities; and the protracted conflict between the two identity groups as an interaction lacking of “the conditions postulated by Gordon Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954) as necessary” for the reduction of intergroup prejudice (p. 581). Arab nationalism thrived within Palestine, aided partly by the British Government’s campaign against Ottoman Turkey during World War I. It grew as an identity out to resist control by outside forces and maintain its autonomy.

The Jews, on the other hand, have a distinct identity represented in the shared historical narrative, body of literature, cultural icons, religious holidays, a complex legal code, the Jewish religion, and the Hebrew language (Sabel, 2010; Kelman, 1999). They have a history of self-rule and independence dating back to a thousand years ago, and are the only people to have had an independent state in the territory.

The emergence of these two nationalities at a time when globalization was just beginning to transform the familiar ideas about nationalism, and the declaration of Israel as a Jewish nation were both crucial factors in kick-starting the conflict between the two identities striving to achieve self-determination within the same territory (Sabel, 2010). Israel had been overshadowed by violence and wars throughout its period of self-rule; and the Palestinians, lost, exiled, and still living under the Israeli occupation had no territory to call their own, and had been unable to even begin to establish a national identity within what

Sabel (2010) refers to as ‘the proposed Jewish national home’. There was disagreement, and territory (representing a sense of identity, freedom and security) was at the center of it; so great was each party’s commitment towards their nationalistic ideologies that paranoid forms of ‘us against them’ emerged, leading to unrealistic conditions of engagement and feelings of need to support one’s nation, for better or for worse, even when such support was detrimental to the welfare of others (Sabel, 2010; Reiter, 2010; Kelman, 1999; Ma’oz, 2009).

Kelman (1999) expresses that this kind of polarizing nationalism is not all that significant today, given the emergence of the ‘global citizen’ concept, and the overall effects of globalization that have made it possible for people to hold multiple national identities. All the same, its role at the very onset of the Palestinian-Israeli war cannot be overlooked.

Religious Nationalism: the High Stakes Involved

Existing literature contends that religion has played a major role in fueling most ethnic conflicts in recent decades. When a state relies on its devotion to religious doctrines to obtain political legitimacy, it leaves ample room for religious leaders and established religious institutions to bring an overtly theological interpretation to any political question. Reiter (2010) provides answers on what exactly the role of religion has been in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He puts forth five characteristics of a conflict fueled by religion (p. 230);

- i) The enlisting of religious ‘warriors’ unfurls beyond the region in conflict
- ii) Individuals/groups motivated by religious ideology carry out sensationalist terror acts and assassinations in a bid to frustrate political negotiations.
- iii) Religious formations that demonstrate adherence to the prepositions or fundamental truths of religion, and show commitment towards infusing the same among members of the public command massive/decisive political power
- iv) Religious symbols and values constitute an undisputable social fabric that the general public is not predisposed to compromise or negotiate
- v) Religious values control holy places and can neither be compromised nor negotiated

Jonathan Fox (as cited in Reiter, 2010) further advances three roles played by religion in a group conflict;

- i) Providing “an ideological framework for understanding the world,” and equipping believers with the necessary tools to confront any attempts to challenge it (Reiter, 2010, p. 233)
- ii) Defining behavioral codes linking believers and their activities to the established framework;
- iii) Creating institutions that facilitate the framework’s operations by organizing and recruiting individuals.

A scrutiny of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, however, reveals that the analysis Fox brings fourth lacks a number of crucial elements on the role played by religion in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To begin with, we have the potential recruitment of persons from the Christian, Jewish, or Muslim world beyond the territory in dispute to add reinforcement to the national group; and the second, the demarcation of holy spaces and holy sites protected by religious values not subject to compromise, concession, or negotiation (Reiter, 2010). What comes out clearly, however, is that religion is a fundamental factor in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel and Judaism have 3 parallel and central “elements of religious faith that represent conflicting values, and are therefore used in specific contexts to reinforce the religious aspect of the” Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Reiter, 2010, p. 234). The first relates to the laws of peace and war and the question of whether or not a nation can settle a conflict by compromising with people from a different religion. The rules of the game are rather clear in this case; the Biblical laws of war are significantly similar to those of the Quran, and both appear to be against any form of compromise. The Biblical Torah commands the nation of Israel to fight, in the cruelest way possible, any nation that prevents them from taking full control of the Promised Land (Reiter, 2010). Islam advocates for a similar position, with verse 60 of Surah 8 of the Quran calling for the spread of the religion by war, if necessary (Reiter, 2010).

The second element of religious faith representing conflicting values relates to the status of the territory in question, and whether or not control must be exclusive. A theological outlook among Palestinian Muslims and Israeli Jews holds that Palestine is a ‘holy land’ – a pious endowment, also known as the Waqf for the former, and the Promised Land for the latter (Reiter, 2010). Either religious faith, therefore, “forbids conceding any control over the land” (Reiter, 2010, p. 239). The Jews believe that it is their religious duty to occupy the entire land and not share it with members of any other religion. This idea of holiness brings about two parallel processes – a modern process and a traditional process (Reiter, 2010). The traditional process derives its logic from the divine writings, whereas the modern-day process relates to the achievement of state-hood in the holy region, an undertaking that calls for sacrifice in defense of the land.

The third element relates to the status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, and whether or not members of other religions have the right over it. The old City of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount/Al-Haram site, and such holy sites as Al-Masjid Al-Ibrahimi/the Cave of the Machpela, Joseph’s tomb in Nablém, and Rachel’s tomb “are anchors for the national-religious and historic identity of a vast population which includes people who are not necessarily religious” (Reiter, 2010, p. 245). The immensely charged nature of the said sites as religious and historic nationalism symbols is demonstrated perfectly by the decision of the Netanyahu Administration to include the Machpela Cave, and Rachel’s tomb among heritage symbols intended for development (Reiter, 2010). The move did not, however, go down well with the Palestinian leaders, and a religious war emerged, with each side claiming ownership and “sovereignty that cannot be relinquished to the other side exclusively” (Reiter, 2010, p. 245).

The Role of the International Community

Saudi-Arabia Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed F. Abo-Sak, in his 1999 research project titled ‘*US Involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Solution or Complication*,’ focuses specifically on America’s involvement in the conflict and describes this involvement as “the root of all Middle East problems” (n.pag). His view is further reinforced by Al-Malki (2007), who expresses that the continuing conflict between Israel and Palestine has very little to do with the international community; instead, it is linked exclusively to “the directions in American policy, and has been subject to the fluctuations in its position and its unwavering bias towards Israel” (n.pag). Abo-Sak (1999) makes reference to a number of instances when the international community, particularly the US and the UK, showed open favoritism, to the detriment of the Palestinian community— their continued opposition to any resolutions by the UN likely to accord justice to the Palestinians, even after Israel has been accused (and as a matter of fact found guilty) of violating human rights; and America’s vetoing of the installation of Butrus Ghali to a second term as UN secretary-General “in retaliation for his decision to publish the UN’s report confirming that Israel’s strike on Qana had been intentional” (n.pag). Hooglund (1995) holds a similar view, expressing that America and the UK cannot be honest brokers in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that their continued engagement has in the past, and will in the future, continue to derail the process of bringing about everlasting peace.

The European Union has also come under fire, and has repeatedly been accused of not doing enough to curb America's dominance over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Al-Malki, 2007). Al-Malki (2007) expresses that the US has imposed itself on the rest of the world and as such, "the big blocs forming the international community have become very complaisant in dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict" (n.pag). They are reserved with regard to Israel and American intractability, and have chosen to alternatively adopt less confrontational, more lenient attitudes.

Al-Malki (2007) points out that even the strongest of them – the European Union- has begun using the buzz word and terminology of the Israeli and American political discourse and espousing the whole concept of evenhandedness in the process. Non-aligned nations are no better – their bloc lost its status with the Soviet Union break-up, "and with the majority of the former Soviet states tying their security and economic interests to the US and Israel," the situation has done nothing but get worse (Al-Malki, 2007). The bloc of Muslim nations lacks mechanisms for implementing the resolutions advanced by the developed world, which often places their political alliances and economic interests above the religious factor. The Arab League bloc is no different; most of its members belong to either the non-aligned bloc or the Organization of Islamic Nations. As a consequence, the bloc has very little to offer; in fact, the Arab Peace Initiative proposal it made during the 2002 Beirut Summit was almost all it had to offer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The existing body of literature, to this end, only indicates one thing; "that the members of the international community do not possess the power – even if they had the will – to impose a stand that contravenes the US" in the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Al-Malki, 2007 & Javadikouchaksaraei, 2016). It is for this reason that most of them have withdrawn from the matter, and have instead resorted to disparate middle positions, leaving the US to define its position and by extension that of the international community, on even the weightiest of matters.

Evidently, studies conducted this far have focused on identifying factors that might lead to the future resolution of the conflict; even those that have focused on religion have not paid much attention to its role in the emergence of the rigid sense of territoriality currently being witnessed. A further objective of this study is to examine nationalism, specifically religious nationalism and its manifestation in the minds of those on either side of the conflict, particularly in regard to the vested interest in the continuation of the conflict.

Expert views and interpretations documented in secondary sources, including articles as well as books concerning themselves with Palestinian and Israeli territorial nationalism will form the basis of descriptive analysis. Source scanning will be implemented at the initial stage to ensure that sources used are credible, and consequently, that interpretations reached are valid and objective. It will entail not only observing, but also developing a comparison of the tendentious sources on the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the aim of ensuring that indifference is maintained, and the perspectives of both sides of the conflict are perfectly clear.

Research Model

Qualitative inquiries usually derive their research models from the social sciences of psychology, sociology, international relations, and philosophy. This analysis makes use of a philosophy-based model denominated as phenomenology, which studies the interest group's lived experiences within the context of a specific concept or phenomenon (Sokolowski, 2000). It attempts to unearth the essence and underlying meaning of the lived experiences of the study group by focusing on two core areas; a descriptive side that simply describes the subjective perspective of people's life experiences, and an analytical side that attempts to analyze what these experiences really mean (Javadikouchaksaraei, 2015). The main idea is to bring to light the essences and underlying meanings of shared experiences or cultures.

As mentioned earlier on, this study purposes to show that both Israelis and Palestinians have an interest in the continuation of the conflict. It aims at unearthing the subjective lived experiences (beliefs and interests) of either side, and evaluating their influence on the peace process.

The two parties currently advancing direct negotiations are the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli government. The mediation of official negotiations is undertaken by contingent of international partners, with the key players being the European Union, Russia, the U.S., the U.N., as well as the Arab League. The study will analyze the behavior and achievements of these ongoing negotiations to determine whether the international community is carrying out its mandate as it should. Methodologically, therefore, this research seeks to explain the practical issues underpinning the Israeli-Palestinian relations; and demonstrate how international relations can be used to solve these issues.

Stake (as cited in Shkedi, 2005) puts forth two types of case studies; instrumental and intrinsic case studies. The latter (intrinsic case studies) study an individual case narrative, with the aim of leaning more about that individual and not understanding some general problem (Shkedi, 2005). This study, however, adopts an instrumental approach, seeking to gain a general understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by studying particular case narratives. The collective case study design gains insight into a central phenomenon by investigating several single case narratives.

Case Selection

The maximum variation sampling technique will be adopted to enable the researcher gain multiple perspectives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To achieve this, the documented opinions of three sheikhs and three rabbis on matters of territorial, as well as state compromise will be presented and compared. They (the opinions) will be reviewed and examined on the basis of three religious faith elements, that the researcher believes are representative of conflicting values, and have been utilized “to reinforce the religious aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” – i) the law of war and peace; ii) the question of exclusive control over the territory in dispute; and iii) the issue of territorial sanctity (Reiter, 2010, p. 234).

Future Studies

The literature suggests that uncompromising positions on both sides regarding the question of territorial sanctity strengthen arguments of political psychology and social researchers who are of the opinion that the City of Jerusalem and the religious sites therein are sacred/protected assets not subject to exchange, compromise, negotiation, or concession. Researchers are paying more attention to the root causes of the conflict, and religion is turning out to be a salient factor. This study seeks to demonstrate that given the high stakes, both sides have some interest in the continuation of the conflict; anything is better than some compromise or a signal of defeat that would attract an even heavier natural penalty.

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